



# NORTHEAST IDAHO

BONNEVILLE, BUTTE, CLARK, CUSTER, FREMONT, JEFFERSON, LEMHI, MADISON, & TETON COUNTIES

## EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The November unemployment rate for the Bonneville Labor Market Area (LMA) remained constant from October at 3.8 percent, which was one-tenth of a percentage point lower than in November 2002 as seen in Northeast Table 1. The *Civilian Labor Force* decreased by 1,180 over the month while the total of unemployed persons decreased by 70. Year-over-year, the *Civilian Labor Force* decreased by 1,440 while the number of unemployed persons decreased by 150. Of the four counties that comprise the LMA, Jefferson County had the lowest unemployment rate at 3.5 percent and Butte County had the highest unemployment rate at 4.8 percent. All four counties were below the state's rate of 5.1 percent. Idaho Falls, the largest city in the LMA, showed an increase of two-tenths of a percentage point over the month to 3.9 percent, which remained unchanged from November 2002.

The other six counties in Northeast Idaho that are not included in the LMA all showed unemployment rate increases from October to November 2003, with rates ranging from 1.7 percent in Madison County to 6.7 percent in Lemhi County. Most of the increases can be attributed to *Construction* and *Agriculture* jobs ending for the season. Year-over-year, the unemployment rate decreased in these counties with the exceptions of Teton County, which increased one-tenth of a percentage point and Clark County, which increased four-tenths of a percentage point.

*Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* in the LMA decreased by 410 jobs over the month. Gains in *Trade* (270 jobs) offset losses in *Construction* (-520 jobs). Year-over-year, *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* showed a gain of 430 jobs overall with significant gains in *Educational & Health Services*

Northeast Idaho Table 1: Labor Force & Employment  
Bonneville, Bingham, Butte, and Jefferson Counties

	Nov 2003*	Oct 2003	Nov 2002	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
<b>INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>					
<b><i>Seasonally Adjusted</i></b>					
Civilian Labor Force	81,850	83,030	83,290	-1.4	-1.7
Unemployment	3,090	3,160	3,240	-2.2	-4.6
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.8	3.8	3.9		
Total Employment	78,760	79,870	80,050	-1.4	-1.6
<b><i>Unadjusted</i></b>					
Civilian Labor Force	82,010	83,250	82,990	0.9	-0.2
Unemployment	2,820	2,640	2,920	15.8	1.3
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.4	3.2	3.5		
Total Employment	79,200	80,620	80,070	0.4	-0.3
<b>JOB BY PLACE OF WORK</b>					
<b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS</b>	63,860	64,270	63,430	-0.6	0.7
<b><i>Goods-Producing Industries</i></b>	10,250	10,870	9,970	-5.7	2.8
Natural Resources & Mining	70	70	80	0.0	-12.5
Construction	5,360	5,880	4,680	-8.8	14.5
Manufacturing	4,820	4,920	5,210	-2.0	-7.5
Food Manufacturing	2,440	2,440	2,760	0.0	-11.6
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	290	310	270	-6.5	7.4
Machinery Manufacturing	440	450	440	-2.2	0.0
Other Manufacturing	1,650	1,720	1,740	-4.1	-5.2
<b><i>Service-Providing Industries</i></b>	53,610	53,400	53,460	0.4	0.3
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	14,580	14,290	14,480	2.0	0.7
Wholesale Trade	4,840	4,780	4,770	1.3	1.5
Retail Trade	7,760	7,550	7,880	2.8	-1.5
Utilities	100	100	100	0.0	0.0
Transportation	1,880	1,860	1,730	1.1	8.7
Information	770	770	900	0.0	-14.4
Financial Activities	1,930	1,950	2,090	-1.0	-7.7
Professional & Business Services	11,610	11,600	11,650	0.1	-0.3
Educational & Health Services	6,530	6,510	6,110	0.3	6.9
Leisure & Hospitality	4,920	5,010	4,900	-1.8	0.4
Other Services	2,090	2,070	2,280	1.0	-8.3
Government Education	5,090	5,020	5,110	1.4	-0.4
Government Administration	6,090	6,180	5,940	-1.5	2.5

\*Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

(420 jobs mostly from *Health*) and *Construction* (680 jobs). *Manufacturing* lost 390 jobs, mostly from the *Food Manufacturing* sector.

## 2003 ECONOMIC SUMMARY

The latest population figures (July 2002) show that the nine counties of Northeast Idaho increased by 4,055 people since the April 2000 Census count for a 2.5 percent increase. Teton County showed the largest percentage increase at 12.2 percent, or almost 1,000 people. Bonneville and Jefferson Counties showed the next largest percentage increases, both at 2.8 percent, with additions of 2,658 and 626 people, respectively.

The latest construction numbers provided in the Wells Fargo Idaho Construction Report (September 2003) showed increases in total permits and total construction dollars cumulative over the nine-month period of January through September 2003. Total new dwellings increased by 235 while total construction dollars (including new residential, nonresidential, and additions, alterations, and repairs) increased by almost \$21 million. Ammon, Bonneville County (not including Ammon or Idaho Falls), and Rexburg showed the largest increases. Rexburg in Madison County topped the list with an increase in total construction dollars of over \$10 million in new residential and over \$8 million in new nonresidential, while showing a decrease of \$3.5 million in additions, alterations, and repairs. The town is trying to keep pace with growth of the four-year Brigham Young University-Idaho (BYU-Idaho), since it changed from the two-year Ricks College several years ago. Surprisingly, Blackfoot in Bingham County showed a large increase in total construction dollars with over \$7.5 million in new nonresidential construction. Blackfoot has expanded its hospital and added a variety of businesses such as a large clinic, a new medical plaza, new retail stores and restaurants, and a new Cal Stores, which is vacating its current location to move into a new building.

Annual average wages have increased from \$25,798 in 2001 to \$26,524 in 2002 for the Northeast Counties as a whole. Annual average employment decreased by 101 people over that same time period. Butte County showed the largest individual decrease of 751 people while several other counties showed small decreases. Lemhi, Clark, Custer, and Jefferson Counties experienced employment decreases of less than 140 combined. Bonneville and Fremont Counties showed combined gains of over 600.

These four economic indicators—population, construction activity, average annual wages, and average annual employment—combined with the annual decreases in the unemployment rate, which fell from 3.9 percent to 3.6 percent, show that Northeast Idaho is vibrant, growing, and relatively healthy. Although much of Northeast Idaho is rural, most of these counties are focusing on economic development and have found ways to keep their workforce busy in spite of natural resource-based industry declines.

## **DEVELOPMENTS AND CHANGES—2003**

### **Closures and Layoffs**

Although the area has generally seen additions and expansions over 2003, there were a few permanent reductions that should be noted.

- Tele-Servicing Innovations closed its doors, with over 80 people losing their jobs. The company cited federal Do Not Call legislation, along with the national economic downturn, as reasons for closing.
- Kenny Rogers Roasters on Seventeenth Street closed after serving Idaho Falls for over five years. The restaurant chain suffered from financial troubles.
- McFarlane's Jubilee grocery store on Seventeenth Street in Idaho Falls closed. The location had been a grocery store for many years, but had changed names several times during its history.
- Several other small retail stores and a few small restaurants changed hands or closed over the year.
- Argonne National Laboratory, part of the Idaho National Engineering & Environmental Laboratory (INEEL), experienced a layoff of about 40 employees in May, but only about 20 were affected from the Northeast Idaho area. The nuclear fuel research and energy security facility, operated by the University of Chicago, said layoffs were necessary to change its mix of workers to meet new priorities it now faces.
- Bechtel BWXT, Idaho, the prime contractor for the INEEL, laid off approximately 200 employees in September. The layoffs were essential due to federal budget constraints and to dissolve projects that were not anticipated to be part of probable future mission priorities.

### **Expansions**

Several existing businesses took advantage of the all-time low interest rates and the improving national economy by implementing some reinvestment projects.

- Denver Mattress Company at least tripled its size, adding Sofa Mart, Oak Express, and Bedroom Expressions to its location on Hitt Road in Idaho Falls; it is now called Furniture Row. Although each store has a separate entrance, the management, financing, and customer service functions are combined for the four stores.
- Growth in Idaho Falls encouraged many businesses to add second locations in other parts of town. AutoZone added a location at the corner of Woodruff Avenue and Seventeenth Street. The company will also add another location in Rexburg in the near future. Artic Circle built another location at the corner of Hitt Road and First

Street. Lettuce Eat added a second eatery in downtown Idaho Falls, but closed the location before year's end. The Mortgage Company built its own office on Seventeenth Street in Ammon. Prescription Center Home Care built a new, larger state-of-the-art facility at Coronado Street. North Forty Family Fun Center added a mechanical bull, karaoke nights, and a Hillbilly Olympics course. Security Connections, Inc., a records management facility that has been in town for over 10 years, added a 15,000-square-foot storage facility next to its existing facility.

- Warmth Wear outgrew its location in the basement of a Newdale house and now resides at 16 East Main in Teton. The company is best known for making fleece and flannel adult, footed pajamas and has used the Internet as a successful marketing tool.

### **NEW ADDITIONS**

Many new businesses moved into the area in 2003, benefiting from low interest rates and a healthier national economy.

- In Idaho Falls, Rent-A-Center (furniture and appliances) moved in next to Walgreens on Seventeenth Street. Tuesday Morning, a retail department store, opened at the Grand Teton Plaza on Seventeenth Street. Bed, Bath & Beyond, a home accessories store, opened next to T.J. Maxx, a clothing and home accessories store, on the Ammon side of Hitt Road. The Scrap Coop, a scrap booking supplies store, opened earlier in the year, but closed before year's end. Other businesses also opened in Idaho Falls such as the Child Behavior Center that specializes in a variety of child- and family-related problems. Daylight Donuts opened at Taylor Crossing on the River off Pancheri Drive. The Purple Gecko, a unique sandwich and soup place, opened off Hitt Road. The owners also owned DD Mudd, which they have since closed to direct energies to the new store. Chuck-A-Rama, a buffet-style restaurant, opened on Hitt Road in Ammon. TrendWest, specializing in vacation resort rentals, opened at Jennie Lee Drive. Weinhoff Drug Testing opened an office on 25<sup>th</sup> Street.
- IntelliStar Group, a consortium of homeland security-type businesses, was formed in the area to offer technical support and fast response in threatening or emergency situations.

## **NEWLY ANNOUNCED AND CONTINUING PROJECTS**

### **Bonneville County**

- Grupo Modelo's large malt facility is still under construction with plans for completion in one year. The beer brewing company is headquartered in Mexico; this is the first malt facility constructed in the United States. It is located close to the Anheuser Busch malt plant off Sunnyside Road south of Idaho Falls.
- Anheuser Busch is close to completing its project to double the size of its malt facility at the Sunnyside Road facility south of Idaho Falls. Mid 2004 is the expected completion date.
- North Wind Inc. is still constructing its new corporate headquarters north of Highway 20 and south of Freeman Park in Idaho Falls. The company specializes in environmental and earth science consulting and management, and now has a construction company of its own. The completion is slated for summer 2004.
- Taylor Crossing on the River, a commercial business development in Idaho Falls, is still going strong. Two large buildings were completed at the beginning of 2003, one more was finished in December 2003, and another one should be completed in the next few months. The buildings are usually 15,000- to 30,000-square feet and the entire development borders the Snake River. Each large building can house several businesses, although Zion's Bank will be the sole occupant of the most recently completed building.
- A second Sonic Drive-In is being constructed at the corner of Sunnyside Road and Pancheri Drive. The fast food store should be completed by spring 2004.
- A second Wal-Mart Supercenter has been announced for Idaho Falls near the Broadway Interstate 15 exit. Though construction has not begun, completion is expected in 2005.
- Lowe's Home Center is preparing to build a store at the location of the former Wal-Mart building on Seventeenth Street in Idaho Falls. Crews have torn down the old building, are carrying off the remains, and are preparing the ground for pouring the foundation, which should take place soon. The company expects completion and operation in 2004.
- UPS announced it would build a new, larger facility just off Utah Avenue and Broadway. It will be

located close to the new Wal-Mart Supercenter. Construction has not begun at publication time.

- Big Lots is redesigning the former McFarlane's Jubilee or IGA located on the corner of St. Clair and Seventeenth Street. The retail store, which offers discounted furniture, clothing, and food, plans to open in February.

#### **Butte County**

- BNFL, Inc. has completed the bulk of hiring and trained its workers over the year. Though partial operations have been started, full operation will start sometime in 2004. The facility contracted with U.S. Department of Energy to retrieve waste from the INEEL and prepare it for shipment over the next 10 years.

#### **Fremont County**

- Ashton Memorial Inc. is opening a clinic in Island Park and expects operations to begin in spring. The building is currently being remodeled at Pond's Lodge and initially will be staffed by a doctor and nurse practitioner three days a week.

#### **Jefferson County**

- Steel Vision is in the final stages of completing its new building located on the west side of Highway 20 in Rigby. The company erects large pre-engineered metal buildings. The new building should be finished before spring

#### **Lemhi County**

- The Sacajawea Interpretive Cultural and Education Center was completed in Salmon this year. It represents Sacajawea's role with the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery. The Lemhi Shoshone (her people) are from this area. Paths have been made, a small center and restrooms have been constructed, and a statue and plaques have been erected that describe the events and people involved in the expedition. A research library was the most recent installation. A recently approved appropriations bill is allocating \$900,000 to the center that will encompass a Native American Cultural Institute, a 350-seat auditorium for performing arts, an interpretive center, and gallery space to help the center prepare for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.

#### **Madison County (Rexburg)**

- Teton Village, a retail and six-theater complex in Rexburg, remains under construction on Second East Street. Completion is expected within the next several months.

- Infrastructure development has just begun on a new business park near West Main on Highway 33. It will house over 20 offices, retail shops, and restaurants when completed.
- Deseret Industries Thrift Store is replacing its existing facility with a much larger one on Second East.
- BYU – Idaho is still growing since its change from a two-year college to a four-year university several years ago. Over 50 degrees were added to its offerings as of 2002 and it continues to add. Student numbers at the university have reached record highs each semester, currently topping 11,000; over 10,000 students are full-time. Because housing continues to be in demand, many dorms have been constructed and more are under construction now. The demand for married student housing has grown since students are now staying longer, getting married, and raising families while attending school. Several new academic and office buildings were built over the year. With all the increases, Rexburg continues to support controlled growth. With the lowest unemployment rate in the state, the town is unlikely to outgrow its workforce.

#### **OTHER HAPPENINGS**

Several other changes took place over the year that merit mentioning. Idaho Department of Commerce Director LaMoyne Hyde of Idaho Falls resigned towards the end of the year. Department of Labor Director Roger B. Madsen was appointed acting director. Jim Bowman started the year as Executive Director of Eastern Idaho Economic Development Council, but Chris Hertz took over the position before mid-year. Before the end of the year, Chris announced his resignation and Kipp Hicks was named Executive Director. Mike Kuhns resigned as President of the Greater Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce for another employment opportunity. He was replaced by Rob Chiles. The U.S. Department of Energy named Elizabeth Sellers the new manager of INEEL and John Kotek deputy manager.

---

Tanya Albán, Regional Labor Economist  
150 Shoup Avenue, Idaho Falls, ID 83402  
(208) 557-2500, ext. 3587  
E-mail: talban@jobservice.us